

55 Wilbur Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07112
September 14, 1981

Hon. Kenneth Gibson
Mayor, City of Newark
City Hall
Broad Street
Newark, N.J. 07101

Dear Mayor Gibson:

On Friday, September 11, 1981, parents of the Newark Swim Team, Inc., a newly established organization supporting young people of Newark involved in aquatics, inspected the JFK recreational facility on West Kinney Street.

We found the facility in a deplorable state and judging by standards established by the board of health, the place would be closed and the owner given an ultimatum to correct these violations. The fact that these conditions have been allowed to exist unabated clearly illustrates the double standard by which your administration operates. City government forces private citizens to comply to certain standards yet violates the same.

During our tour of the center (JFK), the following conditions were noted:

Women's Locker Room:

1. Radiator coils for heating system damaged
2. Ceiling tile missing, having fallen from the ceiling
3. Eighteen (18) ceiling lights in dressing room with seven (7) working
4. Five (5) facial sinks, only one (1) working
5. Shower room, all lights inoperable
6. Of the twelve shower stalls, two (2) are working
7. The entire locker-dressing room areas reek with the smell of urine
8. Several commodes are inoperable and were filled with fecal matter
9. Floors were wet as a result of roof leaks

Men's Locker Room:

1. Heating system needing restoration
2. Floors wet resulting from roof leaks
3. Twelve (12) shower fixtures, four (4) inoperable
4. Two of three sky-lites broken - allowing rain water to enter building
5. Thirty-two (32) lighting fixtures - only two (2) are working
6. Locker-dressing room areas reek with the smell of urine
7. Sinks and commodes mostly inoperable

8. Boiler to heat pool and building in need of repairs

These conditions go beyond our comprehension of effective leadership and government. We ask ourselves and you how can a multi-million dollar facility be allowed to deteriorate to this degree. In spite of budgetary cuts, etc., the answer clearly is that someone is not doing their job.

Many items listed above require no more than several days of simple repair work and parts to replace those that are defective.

Our organization working in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, has established a winter swim program with the intent of utilizing that facility during the winter months as preparation for the summer youth games. This program is necessary for training to perfect skills needed to compete against children who undoubtedly will train throughout the winter.

While it is easy to heap criticism for failure, this case is obviously one of poor planning, perception and supervision. Why hasn't a more active planning effort for use of this center year-round been instituted?

In a community where apathy is second nature to daily living, people have to be motivated. It is the responsibility of the related agency of city government to reach out and motivate the people. Before this can be achieved, that agency and its employees must first be motivated.

May we note, Mr. Mayor, that your staff exerts a great deal of time, resources and energy promoting your political status, e.g., your annual picnic. Since it is the council's responsibility to legislate and yours to administrate, we are therefore, looking to you for action. If people are assigned to maintain this pool facility, what is being accomplished during an eight hour tour of duty on a five day a week basis

If the center was being mopped and sanitized daily, many of the listed conditions would not exist. Since this is obviously not being done, where then is the supervision? Someone is accountable and that person is not doing his or her job. We want to see some action, some accountability regarding this matter. We are tired of bureaucratic red tape, excuses and ineptness. It is a reflection of your administration. As concerned and active parents, we urge you to move on this matter swiftly as our program seeks to commence within two weeks and time is of the essence.

We shall await your reply which can be forwarded to the signee of this letter at the above address.

Sincerely yours,



John L. Smith
The Newark Swim Team, Inc.

cc: B.J. Johnson, Councilman, Central Ward
Sharpe James, Chairman, City Council
Barbara Kukla, Star-Ledger reporter
Leonard Chavis, Director of Parks & Recreation
Richard Romandini, Mgr. Public Buildings
All other members of the City Council